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DE RUEHTA #1967/01 3090345  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
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FM AMEMBASSY ASTANA  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6761  
INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE PRIORITY 2116  
RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING PRIORITY 1486  
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL PRIORITY 1121  
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 2187  
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RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC PRIORITY  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY 1676  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY 1535  
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO PRIORITY 2882  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 2579

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 ASTANA 001967

SIPDIS

STATE FOR SCA/CEN, S/SRAP, INL

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/02/2019

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [MARR](#) [SNAR](#) [CH](#) [RS](#) [AF](#) [ZK](#)

SUBJECT: KAZAHKSTAN: DAS KROL COMPARES NOTES WITH  
ASTANA'S SECURITY COUNCIL

Classified By: Ambassador Richard E. Hoagland: 1.4 (B), (D)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: SCA DAS George Krol met with Security Council Deputy Chairman Marat Shaikhutdinov in Astana on October 29. Their meeting was a refreshingly open "exchange of views," in which Shaikhutdinov, hand-picked from the Foreign Ministry by Security Council Chairman Marat Tazhin, asserted he intends in his new position to be "more than just a bureaucrat." Shaikhutdinov revealed that Astana seems to be on the verge of approving the deployment of several staff officers to ISAF headquarters in Kabul. But we also note his prediction that the deployment of elements of KazBrig to Afghanistan will not happen in the mid-term, because Kazakhstan continues to monitor closely the complicated situation in Afghanistan, including election-related issues.  
END SUMMARY.

STAFF OFFICERS TO ISAF HQ

¶2. (C) Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs George Krol and National Security Council Director for Central Asia Kurt Donnelly met with Deputy Security Council Chairman Marat Shaikhutdinov in Astana on October 29. Krol noted that U.S.-Kazakhstan security cooperation is strong and continues to develop in both countries' interests in this geopolitically sensitive region. Afghanistan is a common U.S.-Kazakhstan concern, which is also true for the other countries of Central Asia, Krol asserted. The United States appreciates Kazakhstan's assistance to Afghanistan, including its humanitarian aid and its proposal to send several staff officers to the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) headquarters in Kabul. Shaikhutdinov noted that he expects these staff officers to go to Kabul soon -- "The paperwork is being prepared for signature."

CSTO RAPID REACTION FORCE?

¶3. (C) Krol inquired about the status of the U.S. assisted peace-securing Kazakhstan Brigade (Kazbrig). Shaikhutdinov responded that KazBrig's experience in Iraq (2003-2008) had been most useful for the brigade and for the army in general. At the moment, however, Kazakhstan is still assessing the

potential risks of sending elements of KazBrig to Afghanistan, taking into account the planned November 7 run-off election there, escalation of tensions, and "other complexities." Shaikhutdinov said that sending elements of KazBrig to Afghanistan will not be a near-term decision. He added that the difficult situation in Afghanistan is of concern to all Central Asian countries. The Taliban continues to move its units into northern Afghanistan, closer to Central Asia's borders, which increases security risks for Central Asia. Krol admitted that the situation in Afghanistan and Pakistan is serious. He said that the Obama Administration is committed to working with all parties to defeat the extremists and terrorists. Krol asked Shaikhutdinov to assess the security situation in Kazakhstan's Central Asian neighbors. Krol recalled that the Commonwealth Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) had decided to set up a Rapid reaction force and exercises had just been held in Kazakhstan. There had been talk of basing the force in Kyrgyzstan, but when he was just days earlier in Kyrgyzstan, the authorities there had told him that nothing has been decided and that negotiations on a Russian base in the south are in the earliest stages.

14. (C) Shaikhutdinov responded that the global economic crisis has complicated the already difficult situations in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. Kyrgyzstan has recently held successful presidential elections. The Tajikistan authorities rule firmly, even while the social and economic situations there are difficult. Regional organizations must constantly reassess their activities, particularly in relation to the general concept to establish

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a "security belt around Afghanistan." The proposal for a CSTO Rapid Response Force (CSTO-RRF) resulted from the fluid situation in the region. While some see the CSTO-RRF as a "Russian project," in fact all the countries of the region, except Uzbekistan but including Kazakhstan, want it as a kind of insurance policy. Even Belarus is preparing its paperwork to join.

#### THE AFGHANISTAN THREAT TO CENTRAL ASIA

15. (C) Shaikhutdinov asked Krol to assess the threat to Central Asia from northern and western Afghanistan. Krol admitted the threat in the north appears to be growing, including on the border with Turkmenistan, because Taliban influence seems to be expanding among the population. While much attention is focused on the fighting in the south, developments in the north bear close watching. Shaikhutdinov noted that Afghanistan's President Karzai has stated that the situation is worsening on Afghanistan's borders with Tajikistan and Turkmenistan. Drug trafficking has "soared 10 times in recent years." The transit of narcotics and precursor chemicals is an increasingly serious problem for Kazakhstan. Shaikhutdinov suggested that U.S. and Kazakhstani intelligence agencies need to improve their cooperation.

#### CHINA ALSO WATCHING

16. (C) Shaikhutdinov noted that China also wants to cooperate on Afghanistan. "Our Chinese colleagues visited us recently and sought our opinion on potential use of the territory of China for your Northern Distribution Network of non-lethal supplies for U.S. troops in Afghanistan. We suspect they are asking us now in light of President Obama's visit to China in November." Shaikhutdinov added that China has sought closer security cooperation with Kazakhstan since the Uighur ethnic disturbances in Xinjan province earlier this year.

#### UZBEKISTAN

17. (C) Krol probed further on CSTO and Uzbekistan, suggesting that Tashkent sees CSTO as a ploy to expand

Russian influence in Central Asia. Shaikhutdinov replied that this is nothing new. Even though Uzbekistan's difficult relations with its immediate neighbors is a "dead end," Kazakhstan would like to be helpful in easing tensions between Uzbekistan and its Central Asia neighbors, although this is admittedly not easy.

¶18. (C) Krol noted that the United States is "step by step" moving forward to improve U.S. relations with Uzbekistan. Shaikhutdinov admitted that Kazakhstan is watching closely this "normalization process." He added that Kazakhstan hopes Uzbekistan, as it comes out of its isolation, will listen more to the United States and the European Union, especially now that the EU has lifted some of its sanctions against Uzbekistan. If Uzbekistan indeed follows this path, Shaikhutdinov suggested, that will help Astana to find a "common language" with Tashkent since Astana already has common language with Washington and Brussels.

NO NEW U.S. MILITARY BASES

¶19. (C) Krol shot down rumors that Washington intends to build a military base either in Uzbekistan or Tajikistan. U.S. Central Command Commander General David Petraeus was indeed recently in Dushanbe, but primarily to discuss improving Tajikistan's border security. Krol added that Turkmenistan remains "a big question mark" because of its "neutrality" and the quality of its military; nevertheless, "We are interested in long-term relations with Ashgabat." Shaikhutdinov mused that Kazakhstan expects Turkmenistan will continue to move toward more openness, including in solving

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its Caspian Sea delimitation dispute with Azerbaijan and its "legal issues" with Iran, both of which create complications for the other Central Asian countries.

¶10. (C) COMMENT: This meeting, without an urgent "to do" agenda, was a valuable opportunity for two relatively attuned partners to share views and advance trust. We note that Astana seems on the verge of approving the deployment of several staff officers to ISAF headquarters in Kabul. We also note Shaikhutdinov's prediction that the deployment of elements of KazBrig to Afghanistan will not happen in the mid-term, because Kazakhstan continues to monitor closely the complicated situation in Afghanistan, including election-related issues. On the way out of the meeting, Krol suggested it would be mutually beneficial to have such frank discussions with the Security Council on a regular basis. Shaikhutdinov enthusiastically endorsed the idea. END COMMENT.

¶11. (U) DAS Krol cleared this cable.  
HOAGLAND